

# Unit 4:

# Incident Commander and Command Staff Functions



FEMA



# Unit Objectives

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- **Describe the role and function of the Incident Commander.**
- **Describe the role and function of the Command Staff.**



# Incident Commander (1 of 2)

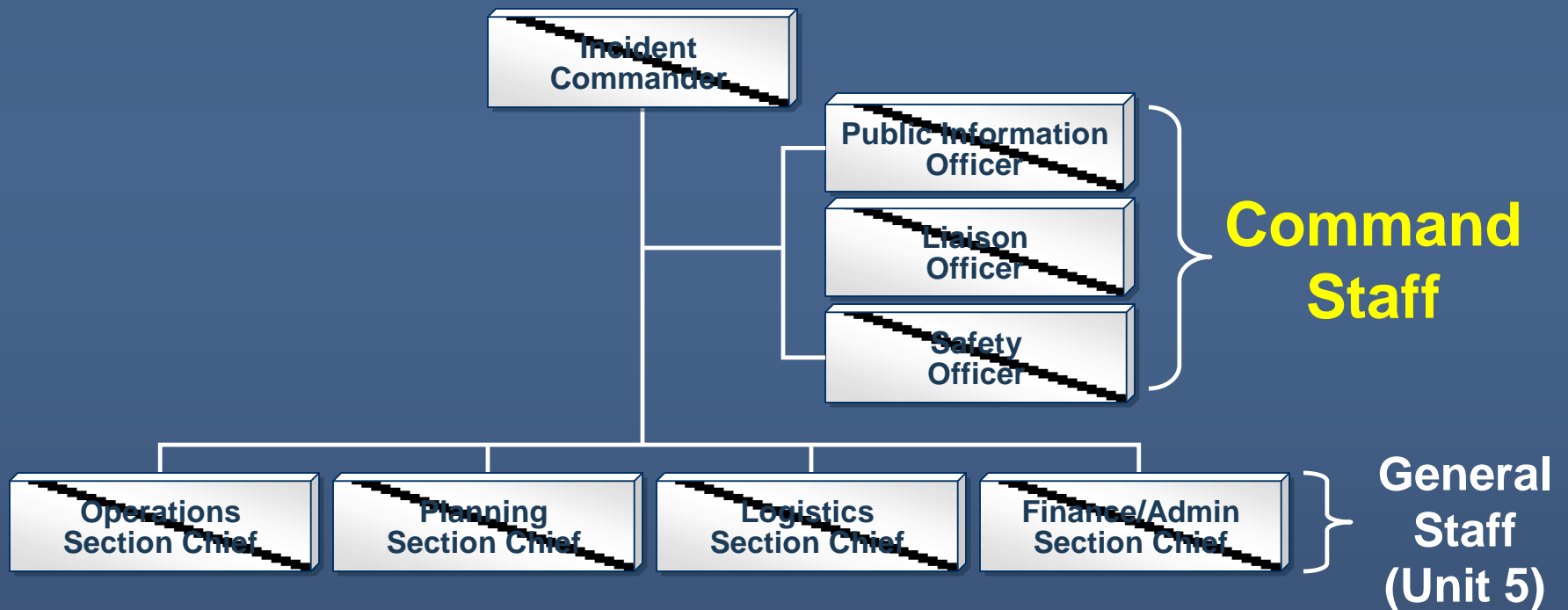
Upon arriving at an incident, the higher ranking person will either assume command, maintain command as is, or transfer command to a third party.



In some situations or agencies, a **lower ranking but more qualified person** may be designated as the Incident Commander.

# Incident Commander (2 of 2)

The Incident Commander performs all major ICS command and staff responsibilities unless the ICS functions are delegated and assigned.



# Incident Commander Role

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## The Incident Commander:

- Provides overall leadership for incident response.
- Delegates authority to others.
- Takes general direction from agency administrator/official.



Incident Commander

# Incident Commander Responsibilities

The Incident Commander is specifically responsible for:

- Ensuring incident safety.
- Providing information services to internal and external stakeholders.
- Establishing and maintaining liaison with other agencies participating in the incident.





# Incident Commander Responsibilities

## **The Incident Commander:**

- **Is responsible for all activities and functions until delegated and assigned to staff.**
- **Assesses need for staff.**
- **Establishes incident objectives.**
- **Directs staff to develop the Incident Action Plan.**



**Incident Commander**

# Deputy Incident Commander

A Deputy Incident Commander may be designated to:

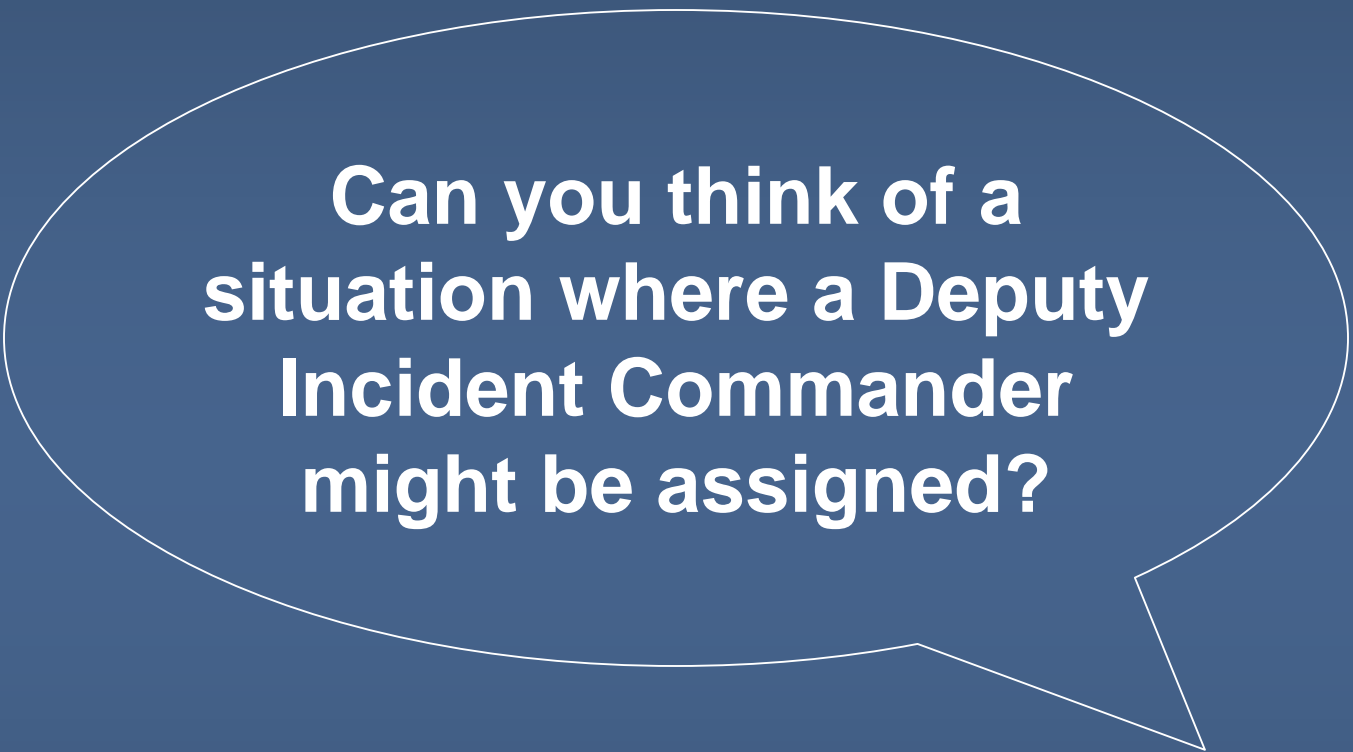
- Perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.
- Perform the incident command function in a relief capacity.
- Represent an assisting agency that shares jurisdiction.





# Discussion Question

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**Can you think of a situation where a Deputy Incident Commander might be assigned?**

# Changing Incident Commanders

**Command may change to meet the needs of the incident when incidents:**

- **Expand or contract.**
- **Change in jurisdiction or discipline.**
- **Become more or less complex.**



# Transferring Incident Commanders

**Transfer of command requires:**

- **A transfer of command briefing for the incoming Incident Commander.**
- **Notification to all personnel that a change in command is taking place.**



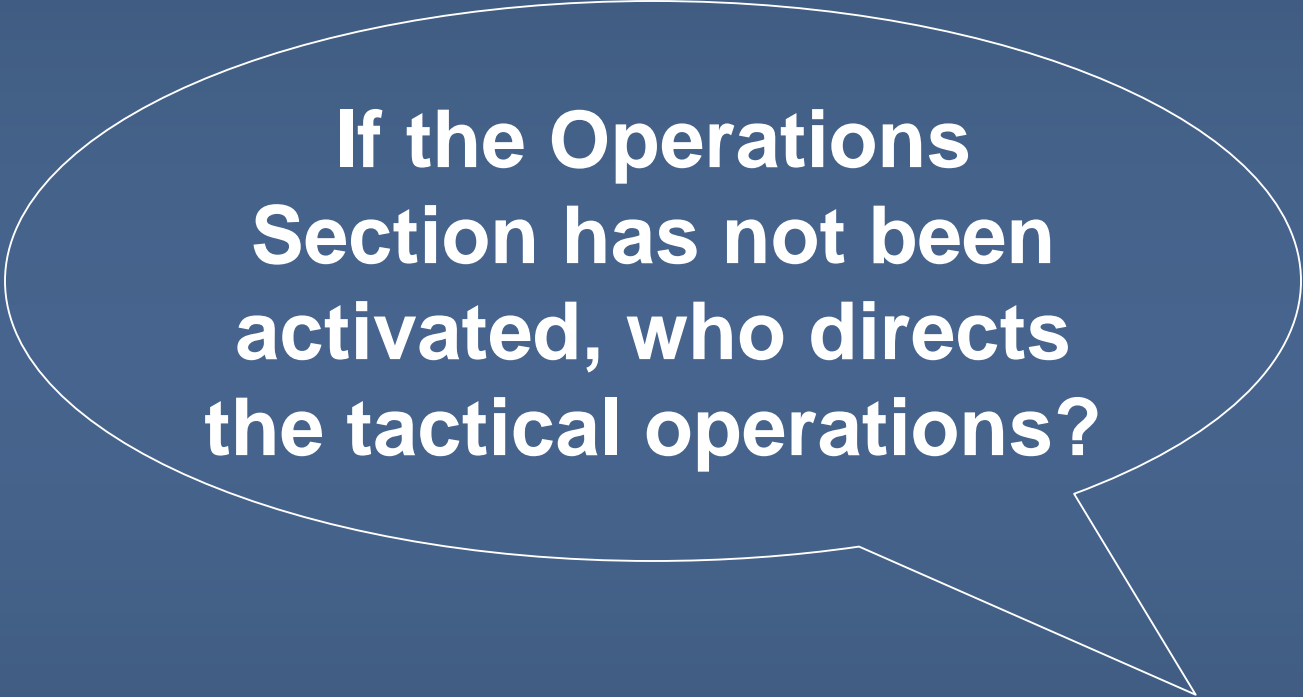
# **Knowledge Review (1 of 3)**



**Who has overall  
responsibility at an  
incident?**

# **Knowledge Review (2 of 3)**

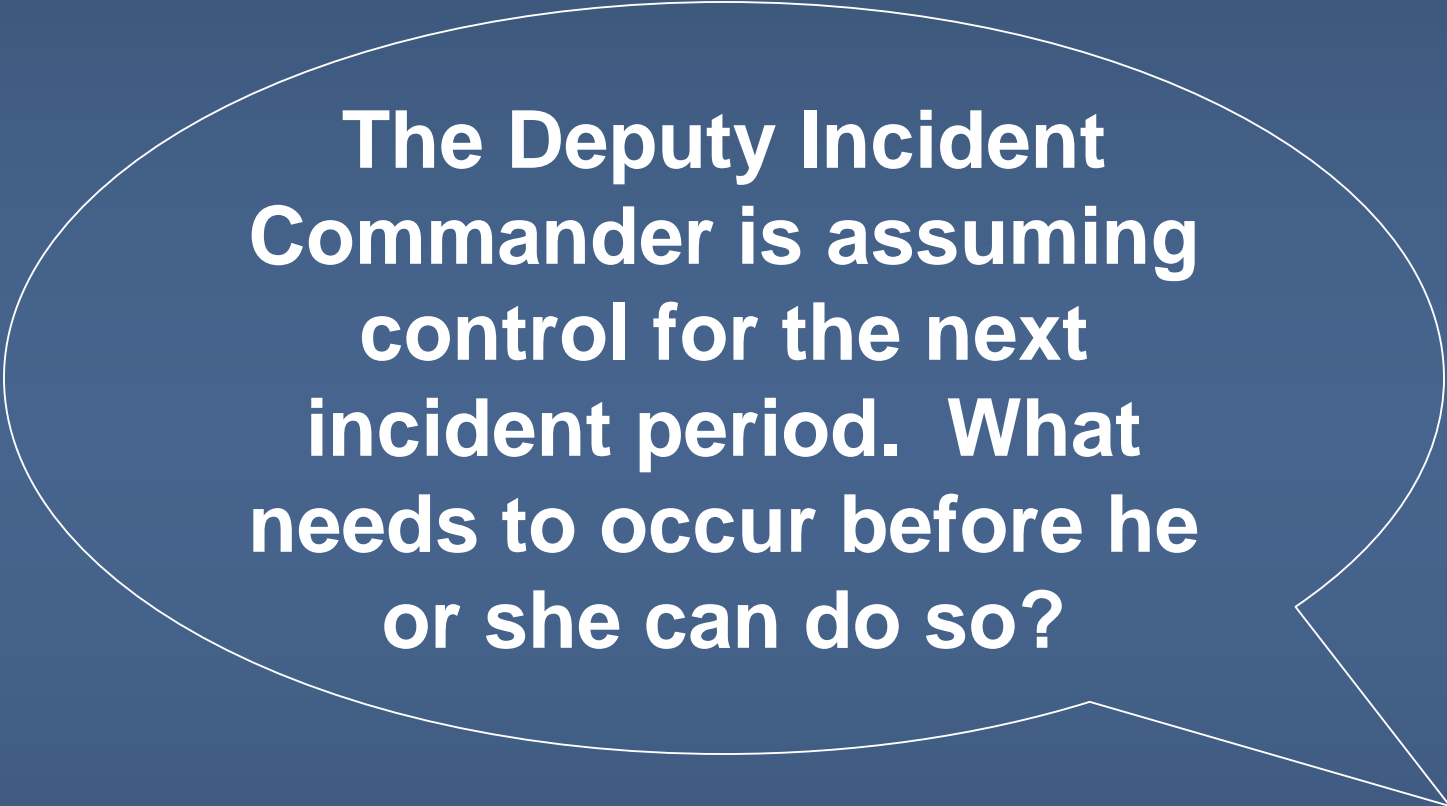
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**If the Operations  
Section has not been  
activated, who directs  
the tactical operations?**

# **Knowledge Review (3 of 3)**

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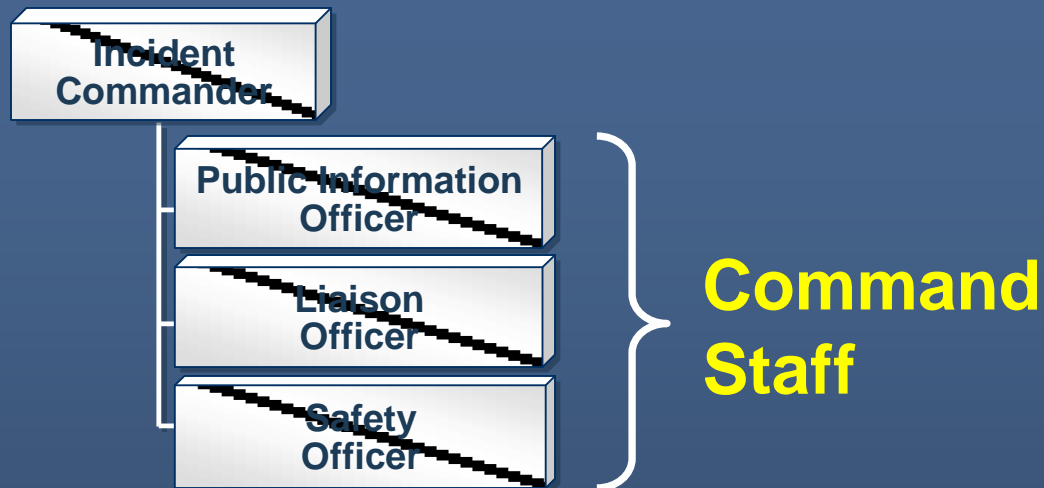
**The Deputy Incident Commander is assuming control for the next incident period. What needs to occur before he or she can do so?**



# Command Staff

It may be necessary for the Incident Commander to designate a Command Staff who:

- Provide information, liaison, and safety services for the entire organization.
- Report directly to the Incident Commander.



# Public Information Officer (PIO)



Public Information  
Officer

**Advises Incident Commander on  
information dissemination and  
media relations. Incident  
Commander approves information  
that the PIO releases.**



**Obtains information from and  
provides information to Planning  
Section.**



Incident Commander



Planning Section Chief



Community and Media

**Obtains information from and provides  
information to community and media.**

# Safety Officer

**Advises Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.**



Incident Commander



Safety Officer

**Works with Operations to ensure safety of field personnel.**



Operations Section Chief

**Ensures safety of all incident personnel.**



Incident Personnel

# Liaison Officer



Liaison Officer

**Assists Incident Commander by serving as point of contact for agency representatives who are helping to support the operation.**



Incident Commander

**Provides briefings to and answers questions from supporting agencies.**

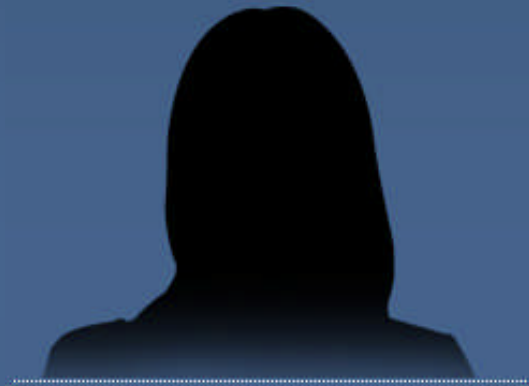


Agency Representative

# Knowledge Review

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**Instructions:** Identity which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



## **Tasks:**

- Advises Incident Commander on issues related to information dissemination and media relations.
- Serves as primary contact for anyone who wants information about the incident.
- Serves external and internal audiences.
- Obtains information from Planning Section.

# Knowledge Review

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**Instructions:** Identity which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



## **Tasks:**

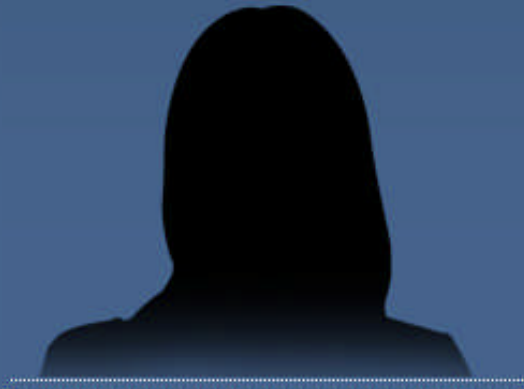
- Makes sure everyone does their job safely.
- Advises Incident Commander on issues regarding incident safety.
- Conducts risk analyses and implements safety measures.
- Promotes safe driving habits.
- Eliminates tripping hazards.



# Knowledge Review

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**Instructions:** Identity which member of the Command Staff performs the following tasks.



## **Tasks:**

- Serves as point of contact for assisting and cooperating agency representatives.
- Identifies problems between supporting agencies.
- Participates in planning meetings by providing the status on current resources, resource limitations, and resource capabilities of other agencies.

# **Activity: Command Staff Roles (1 of 2)**

## **Instructions:**

- 1. Working as a team, review the scenario presented on the next visual.**
- 2. Identify which Command Staff positions would be assigned.**
- 3. Next, if you were the Incident Commander, what specific activities would you delegate to each Command Staff member?**
- 4. Select a spokesperson. Be prepared to present in 10 minutes.**

# **Activity: Command Staff Roles (2 of 2)**

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**Scenario:** An unexpected flash flood has struck a small community. As a result:

- Homes, schools, and the business district are being evacuated.
- Critical infrastructure has been damaged including contamination of the water supply, downed power lines, and damaged roads.
- Perimeter control and security in the business district are needed.
- Mutual aid is arriving from several surrounding communities.
- Media representatives are arriving at the scene.

# Summary

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**Are you able to describe the roles and functions of the:**

- **Incident Commander?**
- **Public Information Officer?**
- **Safety Officer?**
- **Liaison Officer?**